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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JULY 1st, 1854.

Music in this Number.

BRIGHTEST AND BEST OF THE SONS.

Composed by AVISON.

TEACH ME THY WAY, O LORD.

Composed by GIOVANNI CROCE.

MENDELSSOHN'S "ST. PAUL."

Contributed by G. A. MACFARREN.

(Continued from page 57.)

PART THE SECOND.

No. 23.—This grand and elaborate Chorus is to be regarded as a prelude to the representation of St. Paul's holy mission, for which, by its earnestness and dignity of character, it prepares our gravest attention—bespeaking the solemn importance of the subject, and the reverence with which the composer has treated it. The text refers to the great result of the Apostle's fulfilment of his sacred calling in the universal spread of the gospel, and the ecclesiastical style of the music illustrates this reference, by awakening our associations connected with the church and its solemnities.

The introductory movement, with its stately measure, its massive harmonies, its bold progressions, and its broad declamation, is a noble specimen of that grand style of writing of which Handel, in his *Israel in Egypt* especially, has left us some glorious examples; and a remarkable merit in the present piece is, that while it is of a class with these, it is wholly unlike them. Thus introduced, we have now a very extensive fugue in two Subjects, the first of which, to the words commencing "For all the Gentiles," is carried through a considerable course of development which closes in the fifth of the original key, when the second Subject, beginning at the words, "Now are made manifest," is announced and worked in a similar manner. The marked variety of accent between these two themes is of essential value, not only with reference to their subsequent combination, but equally in this period of the movement, as inducing a very appreciable and highly effective relief, to which the difference in the orchestral treatment greatly contributes. The first Subject is then resumed, with the addition of a counterpoint of quavers in the orchestra, and, finally, the two Subjects are brought together with admirable ingenuity, the answers entering at closer and closer intervals, and such other artifices as the resources of this elaborate style of writing include, being practised with a facility that ranks the composer with the great

writers of the contrapuntal school. This is the first Chorus throughout the Oratorio that is written for five voices, and its being thus an exception from the general arrangement of the work shows, I think, the careful purpose with which Mendelssohn entered upon his composition.

Nos. 24 and 25.—An unimportant Recitative for Soprano tells of the calling of Paul and Barnabas to their sacred task by the Holy Ghost. The command of the Sacred Spirit is rendered by the same voice that recites the narrative; which is remarkable, first, because, in every previous instance of any spoken words occurring in the narrative, the speaker has always been dramatically personified, and such words thus distinguished from the rest of the text; and, further, because it appears to be a point lost, not to have identified, in some manner, this address from heaven with the announcement to Ananias, in like wise as that is obviously associated with the miraculous appeal to Saul. Mendelssohn gives, however, too strong an evidence of care throughout the work, to leave us to suppose that this exception from his usual practice can have been made without a purpose, which purpose I can only regret my inability to penetrate.

The Recitative introduces a short Duet, in which the two Apostles declare to the world the Divine authority under which they act. The charming smoothness of this is its chief characteristic, which is induced by the easy fluency of the vocal phrases, and by the beautifully streaming effect of the instrumentation, where every part is so interesting and so importantly essential to the whole, that it is more like a concertante than an orchestral score; a likeness which is borne out by the exquisite delicacy and purity of the combinations and progressions. One passage of continual recurrence in the orchestra is so closely interwoven with the vocal parts, as almost to share with them the melodious interest, yet not to detract from their individual prominence, but rather to extend and connect their several phrases.

The character of Paul is now shown as having undergone an entire regeneration. No longer expressed in passionate declamation, no longer through the nervous temperament of minor keys, which, only, have been employed to embody his ante-baptismal state of irritability and excitement, we find him now represented as full of the gentle meekness which it is his province to teach, tranquil, content, at peace with himself and all the world, a living example of his own doctrine, a worthy messenger of the truths of heaven. Of one spirit with him is his companion, Barnabas, whose association with him appears to be introduced in illustration of his new quality of sympathy; of his inconsideration of himself, save as an agent in a great work, in

which, and not in them who accomplish it, lies the only glory.

No. 26.—This beautifully melodious Chorus is joined on to the last piece, and forms, in fact, a commentary upon it. We have seen how Paul and Barnabas enter upon their apostolic office, and we are now assured of the lovely, or rather the loveable character in which the discharge of its duties presents them to the world. The choice of the same text for the present illustration, as is employed to a very similar purpose in the *Messiah*, gives a peculiar interest to the Chorus under notice, and it cannot here be irrelevant to compare these two renderings of the same passage, not with reference to their relative merits, but for the sake of observing the very different sense the two composers have drawn from the same words. In the exquisite Air, "How beautiful are the feet," and the Chorus that follows it, I suppose, first, the sufferings of the pious pilgrims that preach the gospel, and then, the ever-expanding circulation of the doctrine they taught, to be embodied. In Mendelssohn's rendering of the subject, it is not the painful yet patient endurance of the holy messengers, but the peaceful quality of their mission that is represented; not the wide spread of their spiritual words into all lands, but their confident, unreserved and unhesitating utterance of the truth, with truthful dignity and truthful simplicity. The gentle tranquillity and the winning sweetness of the principal melody, the flowing figure of the accompaniment and the long sustained bass note, charmingly realize the first idea, and the strongly marked and powerful passage which relieves this, conveys as strikingly the second. Handel, in accordance with the character of his work, has generalized the meaning of the passage, while the composer of *St. Paul*, with equal propriety to his more personal subject, has given to it a more personal application.

There is scarcely a more attractive piece in the whole Oratorio than the present, and scarcely one that less admits of definite verbal description. One point in it must be named, not because it can possibly fail to strike every hearer, but because to leave it unnoticed would imply an insensitiveness to its beautiful, its singularly beautiful effect. This is, the prolongation of the rhythm of the opening melody, which induces, when this is repeated, an imitation, in another part, of the phrase that leads to its interrupted cadence; and when it again recurs, makes occasion for a momentary transition into the key of the relative minor, which further prolongs the rhythm, and much further enhances the interest of the idea. To speak of the very felicitous return to the Subject in the original key, is but in other words to declare the movement to be Mendelssohn's, for there is no writer who with such various effect, and with

such invariable success, brings about this always gratifying, but with him peculiarly gratifying incident in a musical design. To judge this movement by its impression, and to declare a judgment by stating the feelings from which it must result, one would less pertinently speak of admiration of, than love for it; and, the more one loves it, the more truly will one appreciate the more justly sympathise with its peaceful expression.

No. 27.—It appears to have been a particular object of the composer to enforce an impression of the perfect tranquillity of the Apostle as opposed to the former aspect of his character, as the consequence of his conversion, and as the important essential that befits him for his office. Thus the progress of the action is delayed by the present piece, which is another rendering of that beautiful calmness which it is especially the effect of the Christian doctrine to promote; and so this, the greatest period of repose throughout the work, assumes an importance commensurate with the branch of the Subject it appropriately illustrates. The short Recitative tells of the joyfulness with which the holy mission was discharged; and the Arioso expresses the joyfulness as a pure, benign, and fervent feeling, that must elicit the respect and win the sympathy of all who witness without a predetermination to resist it. One might suppose from the words that this piece should belong dramatically to the part of Paul, but we find from the music, which is written for a Soprano, that some other purpose was designed in it. How it is to be understood is of course matter of speculation; I would suggest, however, that it presents the whisperings of the Holy Spirit which confirm the great teacher in his undertaking and strengthen him for its fulfilment, the voice of his good conscience that stimulates, at once, and approves his course. With such assurance, the most arduous task is indeed to be fulfilled with joyfulness.

I am somewhat at a loss to interpret the term Arioso, as applied to this lovely little Song, except as a term of modesty to denote its brevity; for in all particulars of form, and expression, and relationship with what precedes and follows it, it is entirely complete, I mean, partaking in no degree of the fragmentary nature of a previous piece, which has the same definition. In construction, it is a concise epitome of an instrumental movement, of which the First Part closes in the fifth of the original key, and is subsequently repeated with its concluding phrases transposed into the original tonic. In the filling up of this form, we cannot but notice the continuous flow of the very lovely melody, the charmingly natural effect of the point of imitation, between the voice and the bass, in what must be considered the Second Part of the movement, the particularly beautiful peti-

tion of this imitated phrase, which introduces the return to the principal Subject, the recommencement of which is a singularly happy application of the composer's favorite artifice, and a very graceful prolongation of the concluding idea that constitutes the Coda. Brief as it is, and ever too brief for its beauty, I have shown it to be in all definable particulars perfect, and I have only to make exception to its definition, at least, to own that I see not the propriety of it.

If not the most striking, this Song concludes what all must feel to be the most continuously charming portion of the Oratorio, and such is our composer's presentation of the reign of peace.

No. 28.—Here again we have a combination for the narrative and the dramatic forms. The Recitative for Tenor describes the opposition to Paul by the Jews; the words of reproof they address to him are assigned to the Chorus as representing the people of Jerusalem; and the Recitative is resumed to tell how they laid wait for him, and consulted together that they might kill him.

The resumption of the fierce, vindictive character that distinguishes the representation of the martyrdom of Stephen, powerfully, dramatically, and most appropriately contrasts the gentle loveliness of the pieces immediately preceding. We have seen the tranquillising influence of the new faith which is illustrated in the continuous melodiousness of the succession of reposeful movements that have just been described, and the impression of this is greatly strengthened by its close juxtaposition with the revengeful spirit that marks the bigoted observance of the old law which is now to be embodied. Charming as is the effect of Mendelssohn's melodies, not less exciting is that of his very living presentation of the anger of the populace, which, as we have experienced in the early part of the work, evinces the most powerful genius for dramatic composition; a genius that could conceive the violent workings of the wildest of human passions, and could so embody such conception, as truly to realize and still to idealize the very animated scenes that are there brought before us. All that has been shown of this great dramatic power is here maintained with equal success, and yet with such variety of expression as proves the ceaseless creative faculty of the composer, which, in carrying out one purpose, produces a multiplicity of ideas only bounded by the extent of the subject.

Fierce indeed is the character of this choral fragment, but it is still dignified: the Hebrews are incensed at their countryman's direlection of his former principles; they rebuke him, and would, by recalling him to a sense of the tenets they suppose him to abandon, strike him with awe of the consequences of his apostacy. Thus, then, their words to him are as much an appeal

as a reproach, and the expression with which these are rendered, is an expression of the confidence of the Jews in their interpretation of the truth, and in the effect this must produce upon him whom they address.

This fragment is connected with the Recitative that grows out of it and that joins it to the succeeding movement, by the employment of its principal phrase as a symphony in the pauses of the voice part, and this connection maintains the exciting interest of the scene as I think no other possible treatment of it could do.

No. 29.—With half incredulous wonder the people commune together on the seeming inconsistency of Paul's actions. From mouth to mouth through the excited multitude is murmured the question, rather in irony than enquiry, "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem?" The murmur spreads rapidly, and carries with it conviction; the people gaining mutual assurance, and acquiring, from their reliance on each other, confidence in themselves, join in the tumultuous cry, "May all deceivers perish!" and vociferating now their ironical demand as a taunt, prepare to force away the offender. This feeling of vindictive cruelty, restrained by the coward's prudence, who waits to see his impulses authorised by the example of others before he will act upon them, and then, the restraint removed by the consciousness that the feeling is general, breaking out with that ferocious vehemence, which is the coward's substitute for courage, has before been presented, and with the same success as now; a great merit of the present rendering is, that while the success is the same, the means are strikingly different. The agitated character of the chief Subject, greatly heightened as it is by the peculiar figure in the Orchestra, and still more so by the half suppressed whispers in which it is first announced, and, added to this, the very rare dramatic application of the fugal form, according to which the voices successively enter, give an individuality to the present Chorus, that, while it is intimately associated with those at the commencement of the Oratorio, derives from such individuality a distinct and peculiar interest. The unanimous vociferations that succeed, with the tumultuous passage in the orchestra that accompanies them, bespeak now no longer the dignified confidence which was manifested in the last piece, but the impatience of a personal enmity thirsting for its gratification, with which the composer has throughout most strongly characterised the Jewish people. The popular fury is aroused, the crowd give license to their evil passions, and, bent upon the deadly purpose of destruction, are impatient to rush on their intended victim. Fanatical zeal is at its height, and with the impious assumption of justifying Heaven, the

name of God in every mouth, the feeling of vengeance in every heart, an instrument of death in every hand, nothing can restrain the eager impetuosity of the people, nothing can preserve him against whom they are incensed, if once within their grasp.

This exciting scene is abruptly interrupted, and, passing from the actual to the ideal, from the vivid representation of the wild violence of blinded bigotry to the reflective expression of the religious emotions of an enlightened observer, the interruption introduces a Choral calling upon Christ as the only light to absolve and to reclaim the children of error.

I am not aware that this tune is one of the countless many which Bach has, in some or other form, chosen for contrapuntal elaboration; and, having but an English knowledge of the Lutheran hymns through their artistic treatment, and not in their practical employment, I can only suppose, from the primitive character of the melody, that this Choral, like all the others introduced throughout the work, is in familiar use in the service of the German Reformed Church. As it was to a Lutheran audience that this Oratorio was originally addressed, it was to their familiarity with the Chorals, and their habitual association of them with certain words, that the composer appealed, in his incorporation of these hymn tunes in his work, as a most appreciable illustration of, or commentary upon the action. The introduction, then, of this Hymn, interrupting the very exciting representation of mental darkness and passionate violence, may be supposed to embody our emotions who witness the performance, and are stimulated by the scene of wrathful ignorance to desire the diffusion of that loving wisdom which is the incentive to peace.

Two verses of the Choral are given; the first, by solo voices without accompaniment, but interspersed with interludes between the strains formed upon a very charming phrase, which is beautifully developed; the second, by the full Chorus, with an accompaniment formed of a further development of the same melodic idea which is employed in the interludes of the first verse. I have to make exception against the ambiguity of key that confuses the effect of the Choral as it is here harmonized, which I greatly regret, since, save for this exception, the effect not less of its intrinsic beauty than its contrast to the movement it interrupts would be perfectly exquisite. I think that Mendelssohn, like his great model Bach, has in many cases sought to do more with these ancient melodies than the tunes can bear; and, in endeavouring, as it should seem, to draw an effect from every particular note, has occasionally overlooked the relationship of these effects to each other, and entirely destroyed the natural simplicity which is the chief characteristic of the themes thus over-elaborated. I plead guilty to disregard

of respected opinions, which I am prepared to defend by reference to the laws of counterpoint which I respect more than any opinion founded upon reverence, even for the genius of a great master; not that I esteem Albrechtsberger before Mendelssohn—good taste forbid! but that I find these cases to which I refer unsatisfactory in their effect, and that the places where they are unsatisfactory to me, violate the rules of the most approved authorities. This is not the place for technical discussion; but, in vindication of the genuine admiration I express, when I find what I cannot admire, I scruple not to acknowledge it. Differ with me who will, you are the more fortunate whose idea of the beautiful is wider than mine, and who may thus be susceptible of a wider gratification than I am.

(To be continued.)

CLARA NOVELLO, IN THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

(From the "Musical World.")

Then, there was Clara Novello. That high and exquisite, that thrilling, piercing, long-sustained B flat, one note, itself a melody no lark or nightingale could match, is still ringing in our ear, "the trumpet of a prophecy" of peace, and love, and plenty, to the world!—there was Clara Novello, with the throat of a bird, the voice of an angel, and the enthusiasm of a patriot. And then the "40,000" beyond the barriers, some with rough and honest, some with sweet and touching, others with as good and powerful and well-intoned voices as many of the "1,700" set before her Majesty, echoed and re-echoed the heart-moving strains, till "God save the Queen" was as the one universal cry of a mighty people, declaring its freedom, its honor, its greatness, its power, its large heart that yearns to the world, and its love for the gracious and illustrious lady whose mild and affectionate sway is at once its happiness and its appeal.—*Musical World*.

CHOIR AND CHORUS SINGING.

(Continued from page 99.)

41. After the practices of uniform and absolute *piano* and *forte*, should come that of shaded or gradual effects from loud to soft, and from soft to loud. These effects are of four principal kinds, viz.: 1st, the sudden passing from *forte* to *piano*—2nd, that from *piano* to *forte*—3rd, the *crescendo*, or progressive passing from *piano* to *forte*—4th, the *decrescendo*, or progressive passing from *forte* to *piano*.

42. The first two kinds of shading have a grand effect, when they are simultaneously executed by great masses of singers. They are easier than the *crescendo* and *decrescendo*; but it is seldom that the effect is given with equality of expression by all the voices. Sometimes the bass, sometimes the tenor, sometimes the treble predominates, or is too weak; or else the singers of each one of the parts do not unite their voices with the others. The Director of a Choir or Chorus should take pains to attain to this equality among masses, without which there cannot possibly be any effect. In order to assure himself of its existence, or rather to obtain it, it is necessary for him to try each voice separate, and to make them practise in detachments, then to combine the whole; and he should be very particular in the execution, never admitting as good any effects but those of the most decided *piano* and *forte*, given perfectly together, and with the most irreproachable equality of voice.